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ABSTRACT

This report examines Maryland's role in setting and measuring higher standards; holding schools, districts, and students accountable for results; strengthening teaching and helping schools and districts build capacity to implement reform; and sustaining public support for standards-based reform. A review team analyzed written documents regarding various aspects of Maryland's education system and interviewed a cross-section of Maryland leaders from government, education, and business and senior staff from the Maryland State Department of Education. Maryland sets high expectations for performance, sustaining rigorous performance assessments, holding schools accountable for ensuring that no students are trapped in failing schools, and recruiting teachers equipped to teach to higher standards. Assessments lead reform. Many schools have shown progress on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program. Gaps between Hispanic and white students on the National Assessment of Education Progress have narrowed. Achievement gaps between low-income and minority students, on the one hand, and their more advantaged counterparts persist statewide, particularly in urban areas. Maryland policymakers and educators are raising the bar for performance again. Recommendations include: all K-12 educators and students must be accountable for results, and Maryland should enhance its role in curriculum, professional development, and teaching quality. Three appendices present review team biographies, documents reviewed, and list of interviewees. (SM)

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Aiming Higher

The Next Decade of Education Reform in MARYLAND

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About Achieve, Inc.

Achieve is an independent, bipartisan, nonprofit organization created by governors and corporate leaders to help states and the private sector raise standards and performance in America's schools. Founded at the 1996 National Education Summit, Achieve has sponsored two additional Summits in 1999 and 2001.

Achieve helps states raise academic standards, measure performance against those standards, establish clear accountability for results and strengthen public confidence in our education system. To do this, we:

- ☐ help states **benchmark** their standards, assessments and accountability systems against the best in the country and the world;
- ☐ provide sustained **public leadership** and advocacy for the movement to raise standards and improve student performance;
- ☐ build **partnerships** that allow states to work together to improve teaching and learning and raise student achievement; and
- ☐ serve as a **national clearinghouse** on education standards and school reform.

AIMING HIGHER:

THE NEXT DECADE OF EDUCATION REFORM IN

MARYLAND

A Policy Review
Prepared by Achieve, Inc., for
Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick
Superintendent of Schools
Maryland State Department of Education

Achieve's Benchmarking Initiative
January 2002

About This Review

In March 2001, Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick, Maryland's superintendent of schools, invited Achieve, Inc., to organize an external review of the state's education reform efforts. Achieve's "education policy review" was sponsored by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Achieve's review was designed to inform the MSDE-sponsored Visionary Panel for Better Schools by providing an expert analysis of Maryland's broader policy context and an outside perspective on the status of its education reform efforts. This report focuses on the state's role in four key areas: setting and measuring higher standards; holding schools, districts and students accountable for results; strengthening teaching and helping schools and districts build capacity to implement reform; and sustaining public support for standards-based reform.

Achieve assembled a review team whose members had expertise in several areas that were of particular concern to reform leaders in Maryland. (Brief biographies are included in Appendix A.) The review team analyzed a comprehensive set of written documents dealing with various aspects of the state's education system, with a special focus on recent policy initiatives. (A complete list of these documents is provided in Appendix B.) The review team then spent more than two days in July 2001 interviewing a cross-section of Maryland leaders from government, education, business and other stakeholder groups, as well as senior staff from MSDE. (A complete list of those interviewed is included in Appendix C.) It is important to note that although Achieve reviewers compared notes and commented on major findings, this report does not necessarily represent the views of the organizations with which the panelists or interviewed individuals are affiliated, and, although we invited staff from MSDE to review a draft for factual accuracy, the observations and conclusions are entirely Achieve's.

We are aware of the limits of this kind of review and of the risks inherent in offering up findings and recommendations based upon somewhat limited exposure to a rich and complex set of issues. We also are aware that, despite the very real progress we have made over the past decade in learning what works in education reform, there is much that we do not yet know. Yet, in many ways, this is groundbreaking work, and we have attempted to provide state policymakers with our best judgment about the strengths of Maryland's reform strategy, the successes Maryland has seen to date and areas for improvement over the next decade. We much admire the willingness of Superintendent Grasmick and other leaders to open their work to external scrutiny, and we hope this report will prove helpful to those with policymaking responsibility for the education of Maryland's schoolchildren.

Education policymakers in Massachusetts and Texas also asked Achieve to conduct similar reviews during the summer of 2001. Reports to these leaders will be finalized shortly and published on Achieve's Web site (www.achieve.org).

ABOUT ACHIEVE, INC.

Achieve, Inc., is an independent, nonprofit, bipartisan organization created by the nation's governors and business leaders to help them follow up on the commitments made at the 1996 National Education Summit. Achieve provides advice and assistance to state policy leaders on issues of academic standards, assessments and accountability. It has a small staff, augmented by a team of senior advisors, and conducts much of its work in partnership with other education and business organizations. Since 1998, under the auspices of Achieve's Benchmarking Initiative, 17 states have sought Achieve's external reviews of state education policy issues.

To carry out this review, Achieve drew upon several nationally respected experts: Judith Johnson, superintendent of Peekskill City Schools in Westchester County, N.Y.; Eugenia Kemble, executive director of The Albert Shanker Institute; Paul Reville, executive director of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education and the Pew Forum on Standards-Based Reform; and Susan Traiman, director of education at The Business Roundtable. The review team was co-chaired by Achieve's president, Robert Schwartz, and its executive vice president, Matthew Gandal. Jennifer Vranek, then director of benchmarking and state services for Achieve, organized the review and authored this report. Jean Slattery, associate director of Achieve's Benchmarking Initiative, and Marian Robinson, a doctoral candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, also participated in the review. (Short biographical sketches of the review team and staff are included in Appendix A.)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In early 2001, education leaders from Maryland, Massachusetts and Texas asked Achieve for mid-course reviews of their standards-based reform policies. The three states are different in many ways: their geography, cultures, socioeconomic and linguistic heritages, education histories and political climates are quite different, and their approaches to school reform often are dramatically different. However, they share at least two critical elements. First, each has achieved success in putting together workable education reform strategies. Second, each is beginning to see results. Nevertheless, none of the three states is ready to rest on its laurels.

In our view, Maryland is among the nation's leading education reform states — setting high expectations for performance, putting in place and sustaining rigorous performance assessments, holding schools accountable to ensure that no child is trapped in a failing school, and recruiting teachers who are equipped to teach to higher standards. Yet its story is unique in many ways among the states. Assessments, not standards, have led reform. These assessments were specifically designed to influence and change curriculum and instruction, not just take the temperature of schools. The assessments also reflect the strong voice of employers, with their emphasis on teamwork and on requiring students to connect knowledge from across disciplines in solving problems. The state's education leadership has been stable and passionate; it has worked consistently with — not against — the field to reform education policy and practice. And Maryland has not rushed into reform; in nearly all cases, the strategy has been thoughtful and the timelines prudent. It is not surprising that support for education reform is widespread in Maryland.

Many schools have shown steady progress on the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP), the state's current primary assessment tool, and the gap between Latino and white students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has narrowed considerably. However, additional work remains to ensure that all children are achieving at high levels. Disturbing achievement gaps among low-income students, students of color and their more advantaged peers persist across the state. Although the problem is the most acute in urban communities, the gap exists elsewhere as well. As a result, the state has not made the kinds of substantial gains in school performance across the board that many had hoped for.

Maryland policymakers and educators are now raising the bar for performance again, as the new, more challenging High School Assessments are phased in. Beginning with the class of 2007, students must demonstrate mastery of academic standards in a few core subjects by passing four end-of-course High School Assessments as one requirement for the high school diploma. Readying the classes of 2007 and beyond for these standards-based graduation requirements defines the challenge facing Maryland policymakers, educators and citizens in the next decade. All efforts to raise standards, enhance assessments and accountability, and improve teaching must be aligned to or in support of the high school requirements. Otherwise, public confidence in the state's education system may erode, and this will undermine additional efforts to achieve equity and excellence in Maryland's schools.

Thus, we urge policymakers and educators to focus their efforts in five critical areas:

✓ **The state should enhance its role in curriculum, professional development and teaching quality.**

Maryland has faithfully pursued the original tenets of standards-based reform: that the state would be responsible for setting standards, measuring progress and holding schools accountable for achievement; and that schools and districts would align all policies and programs to the state goals, including teacher recruitment, professional development, curriculum, assessments, coursework and grades.

Now that the era of student accountability has begun, Maryland policymakers must take a more active role in identifying and sharing best practices. A number of schools have made sufficient progress toward reaching the state standards, but far too many have not. There is a significant need for rigorous and proven curriculum options that match the standards and ongoing, focused and school-based professional development to arm teachers with the skills they need to raise achievement. Local decisionmakers, classroom teachers and parents will also need timely access to diagnostic data, so a coherent system of teacher-administered classroom assessments must be available. Finally, school districts working independently will not be able to solve the looming teacher shortages facing Maryland.

These goals probably cannot be met if 24 school systems attack the problem independently. A coordinated, state-led effort would enable districts to pool resources, access best practices and allow the state to exert leadership in these critical areas.

✓ **The state must have assessments designed to track the progress of every student and every school.**

Maryland has been successful in using the MSPAP to revolutionize teaching and learning. Now, as the High School Assessments are put in place and because new federal policy will require states to increase the frequency of statewide testing, the state should align all tests with its standards, expand and upgrade the elementary- and middle-school testing program to ensure that the data and results are comparable from elementary to middle to high school, and provide results for individual students. This may require considerable effort, but the payoff will be significant. The goal of all assessment development efforts in Maryland should be to provide a seamless set of data points about the progress of students and schools toward meeting state standards.

✓ **All K–12 educators and students must be accountable for results.**

Over the last several years, schools at the very bottom levels of performance have been the focus of public pressure and attention. Maryland has taken extraordinary steps to hold such schools accountable for raising achievement, including "reconstituting," or taking over, four schools. Yet it is now time to raise expectations for *all* schools in Maryland. Every school should have improvement targets to aim for, and the state should design incentives, assistance and consequences to encourage all schools to improve the performance of all their students.

✓ **The state must hold firm on the new graduation requirements and build connections to postsecondary education and employment.**

For more than a decade, Maryland has steadily progressed down its path toward the standards-based diploma. Unlike some other education systems, the state has an action plan for helping students reach the standards, as well as serious accountability for schools that fail to educate their students. Though there undoubtedly will be setbacks and some level of initial student failures, the state should stay on track with the higher-skills diploma for the class of 2007. Students in this class will have attended standards-based schools since their first day of public education, and they deserve the opportunity to demonstrate their attainment of high standards.

Responsibility for high achievement should extend to companies and postsecondary institutions. Maryland business executives and college presidents should pledge to support the high school standards and by using results on the High School Assessments in their hiring and admissions processes. This will help motivate students to work hard in school and will help illustrate to the public that standards-based diplomas are not about punishing students, but instead are about opening doors to the worlds of work and higher education.

✓ **The state must revitalize its commitment to communicate and collaborate with educators, families and the broader public.**

Maryland has successfully moved the standards agenda forward over the last several years, and the state has enjoyed strong political and public support for school improvement. With the advent of the higher graduation standards, however, public support may erode unless state policies are fairly implemented and well understood. More and better information about the state's efforts to raise standards must be shared and discussed often with educators, families, school leaders, community leaders, district leaders, policymakers and others. To accomplish this, state leaders should take maximum advantage of all means of communication. The Maryland Business Roundtable (MBRT) already has been at the forefront of communications with the public about higher standards, and the organization should consider expanding its existing efforts. In close cooperation with state education officials, Maryland business and community leaders also should consider forming an independent organization whose primary purpose is to communicate with Maryland citizens about the continuing need for school reform and to spread accurate information about the details of reform.

INTRODUCTION: EDUCATION REFORM IN MARYLAND

In October 2001, 100 governors, corporate leaders, state education leaders and educators came together for the 2001 National Education Summit. This meeting marked only the fourth time in U.S. history that education policymakers gathered to discuss common challenges and define common solutions — and the first where actual classroom teachers and principals attended. In 1989, the governors established bold goals for the nation's education system at every level — from early childhood through adult training and development. In 1996, governors and business executives committed to establish clear, challenging expectations for what students should know and be able to do in K–12 schooling; regular measurement of student and school performance; and public accountability for results. In 1999, Summit participants focused on concrete actions needed to make these ideas a reality in classrooms: improving the quality of teaching, strengthening accountability and putting in place the requisite support systems needed to help all students achieve high standards.

The 2001 Summit advanced three sets of principles to help improve performance across the board while closing the achievement gap: improving state assessment systems to focus resources and support where they are needed most; developing firm, fair and balanced accountability systems that will guarantee all students an equal opportunity to achieve high standards; and creating and sustaining a top-flight education workforce while injecting responsibility for results into the profession. At this Summit, educators and executives from government and business reaffirmed their commitment to the twin goals of excellence and equity in America's schools:

> We must raise achievement for all students while closing the achievement gap separating the educational "haves" from the "have nots." These goals are an irreducible educational minimum for the United States. Nothing less than their full attainment will serve the nation's social, democratic and economic interests.

Many states have come a long way since the 1996 Summit. Virtually all states have put in place standards and tests to assess educational progress in the core academic areas, and nearly half are developing incentives and consequences for schools, districts and students tied to results. Yet, as standards-based reform enters its second decade, new challenges loom. No state has eliminated glaring achievement gaps. Test results are just now beginning to count for students and schools in most states. While many students are learning more and test scores are gradually improving, more dramatic improvements are needed so that all students can succeed. Public confidence in schools is rising, yet at the same time a small but vocal minority of reform critics are urging policymakers to turn back to the prestandards era. And the law governing federal funding for K–12 schooling — the Elementary and Secondary Education Act — will ask states to do more and do better when it comes to assessment and accountability. States will be held accountable to national policymakers for ensuring that schools make progress toward meeting standards, and new testing systems will be needed to gauge their annual progress.

Maryland is among the handful of states that has come the farthest in raising standards and achievement. In 1989, Maryland embarked on its own school reform agenda with the landmark

publication of the Sondheim Commission report. This report focused on schools, not students, as the primary unit of accountability and focus for educational improvement. Throughout the 1990s, Maryland's policymakers, educators and business leaders worked enthusiastically and steadfastly to raise expectations for the state's students; to fundamentally improve the quality of teaching and learning; to ensure that no child is trapped in a failing school; and, more recently, to make the high school diploma more meaningful. There is evidence that Maryland's reform strategy has shown results.

The question for Maryland, as for most other states, is whether the rate of educational improvement is sufficiently rapid, especially given the pace of economic and technological change in the larger society. Maryland now is launching the next decade of education reform, a decade in which students — not just schools — will be the focus of education accountability. In our opinion, preparing all students to meet higher standards as part of the high school graduation requirements will be the central challenge for Maryland education policymakers. All other policy challenges — such as communicating with families, educators and the general public about the importance of staying with standards-based reform over the long haul; eliminating test score disparities, ensuring that the K–12 assessment system is well articulated; and coping with a looming teacher shortage while continuing to raise standards for teachers — will flow from this challenge.

Maryland's Unique Educational and Political Situation

Each state must address educational improvement in a way that is consistent with its own history, governance system, political culture and demographics. The face of Maryland's citizenry continues to change dramatically, making the need to achieve equity even greater. It is an advantage that the state's size, diversity and quality of leadership all work in favor of achieving higher standards.

Without question, the state education leadership has capitalized on these advantages to create regular opportunities for dialogue and ideas exchange. Maryland has only 24 local education agencies and roughly 1,375 schools. It is a fairly dense state, with a population of 525 people per square mile, as compared to a U.S. average of just 76 people per square mile. More than a quarter of the Maryland population is less than 18 years old, and the student population is diverse. While the state currently is 64 percent white and 28 percent African-American (and 8 percent other minority), the ratio in the K–12 public schools is 56 percent white to 36 percent African-American. Of the 846,582 children served by the K–12 education system, 46 percent are students of color, 29 percent qualify for Title I benefits, and 13 percent have disabilities that require special services.

Urban areas in particular serve not only a higher proportion of students, but also stronger concentrations of special student populations. The Baltimore City Public School System presents the most unique political and educational subsystem within the state, as it serves more than 12 percent of all Maryland students, including 29 percent of the state's minority student population and 34 percent of its Title I participants. It also has the lowest wealth per pupil in the state.

The state-city partnership with Baltimore City is a promising example of how good governance can help struggling schools. In late 1996, the state legislature recognized the extraordinary challenges within the Baltimore City school system with special legislation that outlines unique

governance arrangements and targeted educational programs for the Baltimore City system alone. The state instituted a new partnership with the city. This partnership appointed the school board and hired a system "CEO" as superintendent. The legislation also allowed for the appropriation of approximately $232 million in state funds to Baltimore City schools over a five-year period. These funds help raise per-pupil spending above the state average and raise teacher salaries.

Our review team met with more than 25 educators, school board and community members, and district leaders from Baltimore City. We were impressed with their confidence, their optimism and their sense that the relationship with MSDE is one of a partnership, rather than the typical city-state "takeover" relationship we've witnessed in other places. The arrangement may be paying achievement dividends, as well. Though Baltimore City has been the state's lowest performing system since the start of MSPAP testing, 2000 marked the fourth consecutive improvement of its composite MSPAP score. The 3.5-point improvement on MSPAP in 2000 was the single biggest one-year improvement in the school system's history, and the city also made striking gains in the early grades on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS).

The lessons from the Baltimore City partnership with the state are instructive for Prince George's County, the state's largest school district, with over 131,000 students enrolled. Seventy-seven percent of the students in Prince George's County are African-American, and the state finishes just ahead of Baltimore City in many of the above categories. All but two of the 102 Maryland schools that are "reconstitution-eligible," in fact, are in Baltimore City or Prince George's County, with 15 of those in Prince George's. But Prince George's County, unlike Baltimore City, has not seen significant gains in achievement in recent years. And recent events suggest that the school board in Prince George's is dysfunctional and not as focused as it should be on raising student achievement. We believe that the partnership model, pioneered in Baltimore City, could also work in Prince George's, and we recommend that the state consider building up its relationship with the county, through both financial commitments and greater involvement in decisionmaking.

Raising the Bar

Progress on state assessments. Maryland's principal vehicle for measuring student achievement and holding schools accountable for achievement is the 12-year-old Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP), which assesses students' knowledge and skills in reading, mathematics, writing, language usage, science and social studies for students in grades 3, 5 and 8. The MSPAP was first administered in 1993, and it is designed to measure how well students can synthesize information and apply it to real world problems. Only school, district and state results on MSPAP are reported to the public; individual student results are computed, but they usually are made available to parents only upon request. Only one or two school systems routinely distribute individual student scores to families. Many Maryland schools have shown steady progress on MSPAP. Nineteen of the state's 24 local school systems increased their composite scores between 1999 and 2000. Overall, Maryland has gained 13.6 percentage points on MSPAP since testing began in 1993. The first year composite was 31.7 percent of students scoring at the satisfactory level; in 2000, that proportion of students reached 45.3 percent. And 83 schools scored at least 70 percent satisfactory in 2000 on MSPAP, versus 11 schools in 1993. Though this represents some admirable progress,

performance since 1998 in particular appears to be leveling off, and the state is still too far from its goal of having 70 percent of students perform at the satisfactory level.

Progress on national indicators. The news on NAEP is encouraging, but mixed. Maryland's eighth-grade math results show gains during the 1990s for both the top and bottom quartiles, in the average score and in the percentage of students at the proficient level or higher. The only change in fourth-grade math was an increase in scores for students in the top quartile. In fourth-grade reading, Maryland increased its average score, the percentage of students at the proficient level or higher, and the scores for students in the top quartile. Maryland is one of only 10 of 43 participating jurisdictions to realize significant gains in fourth-grade reading between 1994 and 1998. Yet reading scores for students in the bottom quartile were unchanged, and there was no indication that the gap in performance between the best- and worst-scoring students narrowed.

Maryland has the fourth highest percentage in the nation of public high schools offering Advanced Placement (AP) courses through which students can earn college credit. Nearly all (93 percent) of Maryland's public high schools offer these advanced courses, compared to only 63 percent of its private high schools.

The Achievement Gap

Maryland, like most states, still struggles to eliminate troubling disparities in educational performance among students of color and from low-income backgrounds with their more advantaged counterparts. Work remains to ensure that all children are achieving at high levels. Too many schools are failing to make adequate progress in closing achievement gaps, and the state has not made the kinds of substantial gains in school performance for all students that many had hoped for.

Progress on state assessments. On MSPAP, gaps among student populations are troublesome. The percentage of students achieving the satisfactory standard was lower in every subject at all three grade levels for African-American students. On the third-grade tests in 2000, an average of 28 percent fewer African-American students reached the satisfactory standard than did white students. The results were especially glaring in math, where 53.9 percent of white students reached the standard compared to only 19.5 percent of African-American students, and in science, where 52.8 percent of white students rated satisfactory compared to 21.9 percent of African-Americans. Generally, Asian/Pacific Islanders are the top performers on MSPAP, followed by whites, Hispanics and American Indian/Alaskan Natives, then African-Americans. The performance of American Indian/Alaskan Native students drops significantly between grades 5 and 8, while that of Hispanic students generally trends upward.

Special education students fall gradually further and further behind their counterparts as they get older, and on the eighth-grade tests, less than 20 percent were achieving the satisfactory standard on the tests, including just 6.5 percent on the reading test. Approximately half the regular education students were doing so, though their reading scores were also low, with only 29.4 percent of students deemed satisfactory. Female students performed better than male students at every grade level and in every subject, with the disparity growing greater as the students got older.

Progress on national indicators. On NAEP, both white and African-American fourth graders experienced statistically significant reading gains between 1994 and 1998, but substantial performance differences persist. On the 1998 fourth-grade reading test, white students scored 229 versus 195 for African-American students, and 76 percent of white students performed at or above basic reading levels, as compared to only 38 percent of Arican-American students. Sixty-three percent of poor fourth graders performed below basic, while only 27 percent of non-poor students were below basic. On the 1998 eighth-grade reading test, Maryland students scored 262, ahead of the national average, yet 50 percent of African-American students had less than basic proficiency, as compared with just 17 percent of white students. Similarly, 48 percent of poor students failed to meet the basic standard, as opposed to 21 percent of non-poor students.

On the 1998 eighth-grade NAEP writing test, 31 percent of white students and 36 percent of Asian students achieved proficiency, versus just 7 percent of African-American students and 8 percent of Hispanics. The results were much the same for the math and science tests. Seventy-four percent of eighth-grade African-American students were unable to achieve basic performance in science, and 70 percent of fourth-grade African-American math students were unable to do so. This compares to just 26 percent and 23 percent of white students in the same categories. The numbers are not much better for Hispanic students, less than half of whom are achieving basic proficiency on the math and science tests.

In a school system where 56 percent of students are white, these students took 72 percent of English/Composition AP tests, 75 percent of Calculus AB AP tests and 69 percent of Biology AP tests. Though African-American students make up 36 percent of students, they took just under 12 percent of English/Composition AP tests, 9.5 percent of Calculus AB AP tests and less than 11 percent of Biology AP tests.

High school students' dropout rates also reflect the academic achievement gap. A new study from the Manhattan Institute compares the proportion of students in ninth grade that graduate from high school within four years. Overall, 79 percent of Maryland students graduate within four years, which tracks with the national rate of 87 percent. Eighty percent of white students graduated, compared to 70 percent of Hispanics and 66 percent of African-Americans. The good news is that Maryland's graduation rate for Hispanic students is the third highest in the country and fifth highest in the nation for African-Americans, whereas nationally, only 54 percent of Hispanic students and 56 percent of African-Americans graduate in four years.

PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS: 1989–2001

When Achieve's review team examined Maryland's record, it was clear that few areas of education policy have been left untouched. Elected and appointed state officials have continuously challenged Maryland public educators, parents, community and business leaders, students and themselves to revitalize and achieve equity in public education. Under Dr. Grasmick's leadership in particular, the Maryland State Board of Education (MSBE) and MSDE have created or revised solid policies and programs that support Maryland's goal of high performance for every student and school. In our analysis, these policies add up to a rigorous view of schooling that should support most schools and students in reaching high standards. Work remains to ensure that the policies are of the highest quality and that they have the intended consequences, but we commend the state for making tremendous progress, particularly in the following areas.

IMPROVING TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH ASSESSMENT

Both stability and exploration into new territory characterize the state's approach to assessment. The state's commitment to measure and report on student learning reaches as far back as 1972, when policymakers enacted legislation requiring statewide minimum skills testing. During the 1980s, Maryland's elected and appointed leadership embraced the notion that schooling needed a more fundamental overhaul than basic-skills testing if all students were to be prepared for the demands of the Information Age. Thus, Maryland's school reform efforts began in earnest in 1987, with the landmark Governor's Commission on School Performance. The resulting 1989 report came to be known as the Sondheim Report. The findings and recommendations in this report are prescient; they foretell the ideas behind standards-based reform as it has come to be known in 48 other states.

The Sondheim Report called for an emphasis on results and student achievement rather than educational inputs, revolutionizing the curriculum taught in schools by focusing on advanced critical thinking skills, measuring performance against lofty goals with common assessments and increasing accountability of public education to Maryland taxpayers. Moreover, the report rested its findings on three critical premises:

- All children can learn.
- All children have the right to attend schools in which they can progress and learn.
- All children shall have a real opportunity to learn equally rigorous content.

Such concepts may have been radical at the time, but today they are the cornerstones of the standards movement that has spread to nearly every state in the nation. The report led to the establishment of the MSPP and the MSPAP, one of the nation's first statewide testing and accountability regimes to measure achievement and hold schools accountable for making progress.

MSPAP is perhaps the most distinctive and well-known feature of Maryland's school improvement efforts. As several states can attest, assessment programs can be both "drivers" and

"derailers" of reform. Without common assessments, standards will not be implemented consistently and effectively, yet the assessments themselves have sometimes come under attack. MSPAP is not without its detractors. It is a complex and expensive method for influencing teaching and learning. Some view MSPAP as subjective and question its quality and alignment to standards. Yet, by and large, most Maryland educators and citizens we spoke with believe it is a "test worth teaching to," and a large body of independent studies and other evidence suggest that MSPAP has accomplished many of its goals.

Unlike most other statewide testing programs, MSPAP aims to fundamentally change the nature of teaching and learning in elementary and middle schools. (Most other testing programs, in our view, take the pulse of "what is," rather than try to lead schools in the direction of "what should be.") Though only individual student work is actually scored, students frequently work in groups as part of the assessment to undertake extended "performance tasks" that integrate content knowledge from and reinforce skills across the core subject areas. No multiple-choice questions are included, and student-level results are not derived from the student groups' answers — only school-, system- and state-level results are reliably produced and publicly reported. MSPAP's emphasis on group work and higher level thinking skills is designed to encourage schools to reinvent curriculum, to inject problem-solving and reasoning exercises into all subjects, and to promote teamwork and improved interpersonal skills.

And, when concerns arose from families, teachers and others about the testing program — in particular, the desire for individual student results that could be compared against national averages — MSDE responded by adding the CTBS in grades 2, 4 and 6 to the statewide testing diet (many districts were already using norm-referenced tests in several grades).

Clearly, Maryland's assessment system — not content or performance standards — has been the primary driver of teaching and learning over the last decade. This represents a departure from most other states. The "learning outcomes" and "core learning goals" that were in place for most of the 1990s were broad outlines of the skills with which students should exit from key grades, rather than specific expectations designed to guide local curriculum and instruction. Maryland came under criticism from several national advocacy groups — notably, the American Federation of Teachers and the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation — for the minimal guidance provided by such broad goals statements.

In response, the state recently adopted "content standards" in addition to the goals. In 2001, the American Federation of Teachers lauded the standards in English, math and science for being sufficiently clear, specific and grounded in core content. While Achieve did not conduct a full analysis, the new standards seem to respond to teachers' and districts' calls for more explicit guidance about what the state expects. No set of academic standards is perfect, but these standards represent a significant improvement from the learning outcomes.

Over the next decade, we believe the content standards should be the glue that ensures articulation across the assessment system, local curriculum and instruction, professional development and teacher education.

Statewide teacher committees are currently working with MSDE staff to develop sample grade-by-grade benchmarks aligned to the statewide content standards, and other implementation resources are available on the department's Web site (www.mdk12.org). We heard from educators and policymakers in Baltimore City Schools that the consistent use across the city's elementary schools of a single reading program has helped tremendously with teacher professional development and student learning. Leaders from other school systems also detailed their activities to identify and produce aligned curriculum documents and tools. These are admirable efforts, ones that all Maryland schools and districts will need to undertake as they prepare all students to meet higher standards.

Accountability for Results

The most notable other program to arise from the Sondheim Report is the Maryland School Performance Program (MSPP). In Achieve's view, tying accountability to results is perhaps the strongest aspect of Maryland's school reform efforts over the last decade. Hardly any states have practiced accountability for schools as strongly as Maryland. The state has not been afraid to take bold steps — such as taking over failing schools — when it comes to ensuring that all children have an opportunity to meet high standards.

In 1993, state regulations established the use of MSPAP results, results from the Functional Literacy Tests (the state's current graduation tests that are pitched at very minimal skill levels), plus student participation (dropout and attendance rates) to rate school performance. MSPAP results are reported through five proficiency levels, with level 1 being the most proficient. Schools are expected to meet a "satisfactory" performance standard, which entails 70 percent of students scoring at proficiency level 3 or above.

At the 1999 National Education Summit, Achieve identified several elements of comprehensive accountability systems:

- *student incentives*, such as graduation and/or promotion exams;
- *school report cards*, ratings that classify schools based on performance;
- *assistance* for low-performing schools to help them improve;
- *rewards* for highly successful schools; and
- *sanctions* for chronically failing schools.

Maryland is one of only six states that has put all these pieces together.

At the 2001 National Education Summit, participants further strengthened their commitment to firm, fair and balanced accountability systems in which all education stakeholders, including policymakers, are held accountable for raising student achievement. These principles go further than the accountability elements discussed in the 1999 Summit to offer sound advice for implementing accountability and include:

- *adequate phase-in* to ensure proper time and support for schools to align curriculum and teacher professional development;

- *assistance before intervention* to provide targeted assistance to low-performing schools before intervening with more drastic remedies;
- *more flexible schooling* for students with the greatest academic distance to travel to meet standards;
- *sanctions* for chronically failing schools;
- *shared accountability* for both adults and students in the system; and
- *alignment with college admission and employment* so that the high school diploma becomes more than a piece of paper and instead signifies readiness for college-level work and high-performance jobs.

Although no state yet adheres to all these principles, Maryland is one of only a handful whose accountability system meets most of these criteria. Perhaps most significantly, it is the only state we know of that has taken strong steps to rescue those children trapped in academically failing schools and that started with school accountability well before student incentives came on board. In place for nearly seven years, the state's accountability system for elementary and middle schools has identified dozens of schools for local reconstitution and another dozen or so as eligible for state action. Although more remains to be done, Maryland is at the vanguard of all states in actually holding schools accountable for academic achievement. In 2000, three failing schools were turned over to third-party private management because of their failure to improve on their own; in 2001, one more school was reconstituted. These bold actions have withstood several court challenges to date. Very few states have attempted to connect their rhetoric and actions to strong accountability as has Maryland. We applaud MSDE for its leadership in making it clear to all Maryland citizens that academic failure will not be tolerated and that all students deserve the opportunity to succeed.

Maryland education policymakers and business leaders also should be commended for making the high school diploma more meaningful. Students in the class of 2007 will be required to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by passing the new end-of-course High School Assessments in four critical subject areas — English, algebra, biology and government — as part of the new diploma requirements that also include passing grades and service-learning activities. To help acclimate schools, parents and students to these new demands, the state is already requiring that test scores be reported on student transcripts. This should help encourage students to take the assessments seriously, even before they count for graduation.

And Maryland is implementing a far-reaching plan to help all children succeed in meeting standards. It is one of the first states to commit resources to provide some students and school systems with greater supports, more intensive interventions and professional development opportunities. The comprehensive framework envisioned in *Every Child Achieving* represents Maryland's commitment to preparing all students to meet the challenging new graduation requirements.

Investments in Educator Capacity Building

Particularly during the last few years, Maryland has begun to address the critical challenge of attracting, training and retaining a cadre of teachers and principals who are equipped to bring virtually all students to high standards. This is truly where the rubber will meet the road in standards-based reform, as American policymakers move from the relatively easy task of setting standards to implementing them in all schools. It is also the area in which Maryland policymakers have the most work remaining to ensure that all educators are meeting standards of excellence.

The state's exemplary K–16 partnership is wisely focused on teacher preparation (as well as articulation of student expectations), and together the K–12 and higher education systems have implemented more rigorous standards for entering teachers. For example, all teachers in colleges of education, regardless of their subject area concentrations or teaching license areas, are required to take research-based courses in reading. Elementary teachers must take 15 hours total in teaching reading that include training in reading process and acquisition, instruction, materials selection and reading assessment. Potential middle and high school teachers must take six hours of coursework in reading instruction. Additionally, already-practicing teachers must fulfill the relevant requirements in order to renew their teaching certificates. Though there is much more the state can do to improve teacher preparation, this particular emphasis on reading sets Maryland apart from many states.

Other efforts are underway. Some schools of education have increased their mathematics and science coursework requirements for prospective elementary and middle school teachers, and all prospective high school educators must now earn a second major in a content area (in addition to the education major). The state has set the most challenging passing scores for elementary teachers in the nation on the Praxis II exams. And the presidents of the state's colleges and universities are held accountable by the chancellor of higher education for the quality of their teacher education programs.

Maryland faces a looming teacher shortage over the coming decade, however, so raising teacher standards must be coupled with other strategies to raise the status of the profession. Maryland has put in place various financial incentives to help attract and retain talented educators to the state's school systems. The statewide incentives include $1,000 signing bonuses for prospective educators in the top 10 percent of their graduating class, funding for low-interest mortgages, tax credits for graduate work in education, $2,000 annual stipends to teachers who achieve National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification and $2,000 annual stipends to teachers who teach in state-identified "challenge" or "reconstitution-eligible" schools.

MSDE also has some professional development programs and collaborations underway. In particular, the state is implementing a thoughtfully designed series of "principals' institutes" to help principals evolve from facilities and discipline managers to instructional leaders. Regional Professional Development Networks could be a promising strategy for developing and delivering high-quality professional development, though Achieve's review team heard very little from educators about the extent to which these networks contribute to capacity building.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

One of the most important lessons from leading school reform states is that educational change takes enormous political will, and that will must be sustained over several years, if not decades. If states are to combat the notion that, like many other things in education, standards "too shall pass," then elected and appointed officials must work closely with community, business and education leaders to develop workable policies, revisit and revise them periodically and, most importantly, speak with a single voice about the absolute necessity of changing public education to ensure that all children achieve at substantially higher levels than in the past. To date, Maryland has been remarkably successful in this regard.

Reform in Maryland, like in North Carolina and Texas, has endured legislative and gubernatorial turnover. Stability and commitment from elected leadership are some of most important ingredients of lasting school improvement. Dr. Grasmick is widely regarded as the driver of reform in the 1990s, and her tenure has been marked by cooperation and collaboration with educators and state policymakers. The support and commitment of key state legislators and the state board of education are notable. Together, these leaders have crafted thoughtful policies and sustained reform over time.

Leadership and support from the business community have been essential. Often, business leadership is the linchpin that enables reform to survive turnover in political leadership. Maryland's business community has been an ardent supporter of education policy and programs targeted on raising student achievement. The MBRT is recognized as one of the strongest state business groups in the country on education issues. Its nine-point policy agenda, modeled after the (national) Business Roundtable's agenda, focused the business community on standards-based reform throughout the 1990s and up to the present. The stark finding of the *Maryland Workforce Educational Needs Assessment Survey* sponsored regularly by the MBRT and the Maryland Economic Development Commission — that key businesses cannot grow in Maryland unless high school students graduate with higher skill levels — has played an important role in explaining the need for stronger high school graduation requirements. The MBRT's *Achievement Counts* campaign provides a unique model for communicating the importance of academic achievement to high school students. The campaign added *Parents Count* as a component to inform parents about reform efforts in Maryland through print and Web-based information made available to parents by their employers.

College and university faculty and leaders have also been supportive of K–12 school improvement. The state's K–16 Partnership for Teaching and Learning — co-chaired by Dr. Grasmick, Karen Johnson, the head of the state's Higher Education Commission, and Dr. Donald Langenberg, the Chancellor of the University of Maryland — has been one of the strongest such collaborations in the country. Faculty from the state's colleges and universities lent their content expertise in the development of the K–12 content standards and the High School Assessments.

Clearly, leadership, communication, adjustment and collaboration with the field are among the strongest elements of Maryland's overall education reform strategy. Maryland has thoughtfully practiced at least two major "standards" for education reform. First, reform is done *with* educators,

not *to* them. Second, people support what they help create. Much of the state's reform story is framed by its commitment to bringing all Maryland education stakeholders to the table for two-way conversations.

Maryland's public engagement strategy is not simply based on getting a set of messages across, but on genuinely engaging the field in the interest of building better policy that will ultimately be embraced by those charged with carrying out the policy.

Under the leadership of Dr. Grasmick, MSDE:

- has been highly adept at utilizing partnerships with key allies — the MBRT, colleges and universities, and the various professional education organizations — to communicate policy and strategy and to gather feedback from key stakeholders;

- has frequently used commissions and advisory groups — such as the current Visionary Panel for Better Schools — to develop policy and create support for new initiatives. The panels have a sharp focus on thorny policy and implementation problems, and they have been used constructively to learn from Maryland citizens and education constituents;

- has taken advantage of Maryland's small size and number of school systems to regularly bring school leaders together and reach out to constituents. Dr. Grasmick meets monthly with all 24 school superintendents. This has made coordination and alignment of policy and programs much easier than in many other states; and

- has attracted talented staff and leadership to work with the field in developing and implementing reform. MSDE leadership appears to have credibility with Maryland citizens — something that, unfortunately, too often is missing in state education agencies.

The hard work by MSDE, business and higher education leaders to develop and implement education reform is paying off in some ways: Among the educators and citizens with whom we spoke, there appears to be strong support for standards and accountability. Still, the public clearly needs to be brought "up to speed" on the state's efforts to raise standards, particularly as the date for full implementation of the new high school graduation requirements draws nearer. The public's current rock-solid support for higher standards will be tested as the class of 2007 readies itself for the standards-based graduation requirements.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT DECADE OF REFORM

Beginning with the class of 2007, students must demonstrate mastery of academic standards in a few core subjects by passing end-of-course High School Assessments as one requirement for the high school diploma. Based on the state's content standards, these assessments set a much higher bar than the Maryland Functional Tests. Readying the classes of 2007 and beyond for these standards-based graduation requirements defines the challenge facing Maryland policymakers, educators and citizens in the next decade of reform. All efforts to raise standards, enhance assessments and accountability, and improve teaching must be aligned to or in support of the high school requirements. Otherwise, public confidence in the state's education system may erode, and this will undermine additional efforts to achieve equity and excellence in Maryland's schools.

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY TO DELIVER ON STANDARDS-BASED REFORM

Participants at the 2001 National Education Summit identified four major areas to focus on in the task of preparing all educators to succeed:

- *recruiting and preparing* teachers and school leaders;
- *providing tools and support*, especially access to high-quality curriculum materials and professional development;
- *upgrading compensation systems* to make teacher salaries more competitive while tying salary differentials to skills, performance, differential responsibilities and shortages in critical needs areas like math and science; and
- *matching strengths to needs* so that the most effective educators are encouraged to work in lower-performing schools.

While Maryland has taken some initial steps to raise standards for prospective teachers and provide financial bonuses for exemplary teachers or teachers in the most struggling schools, much more work is needed to recruit, train, support and retain teachers and principals who are prepared to bring all students to high standards. Many of the recommendations in this section are related to recommendations made in *Every Child Achieving*, particularly those regarding the need for a systematic, coordinated statewide strategy for professional development; yet, at the time of this review, the status of the implementation of those ideas was unclear.

✓ **Recommendation: Help districts address severe teacher shortages by developing a targeted statewide teacher recruitment and retention strategy, while at the same time continuing to raise standards for teachers.**

Maryland faces a looming teacher shortage — in the 2001–02 school year alone, there were more than 8,000 teacher openings, yet only 2,500 teachers are produced each year in Maryland, and only 1,500 elect to teach in Maryland. The state will need to aggressively recruit talented and diverse professionals who will commit to teaching. Simply raising educator salaries across the board by a few percent is not likely to be sufficient, nor are we suggesting that the state lower its standards for incoming teachers.

Make alternative routes to certification desirable and fruitful. Maryland should turn its attention to attracting and retaining teachers from outside the traditional routes into education. Currently, only Baltimore City and Prince George's County have approved the Resident Teacher Certificate Programs, the state's alternative certification program. Maryland needs a stronger statewide strategy for recruiting nontraditional and noncertified teachers; these include paraprofessionals, career-changers and liberal arts majors. And the state will also want to collaborate with school districts to encourage many more teacher leaders to become school leaders as the importance of the principal's role and demands of the job are simultaneously increasing. The goal of such efforts must be to upgrade the quality of the education workforce, not to simply increase the supply of warm bodies in the classroom. And while alternative certification programs are not without their challenges, they offer valuable lessons for Maryland policymakers to consider.

New Jersey's alternative certification program, begun in 1984, is an exemplary model for Maryland to consider. In collaboration with universities, the state actively recruited liberal arts graduates and put them through a school-based program, paired the candidates with mentor teachers, and provided formal instruction in education methods while the candidate was already in the classroom. The teachers trained in the alternate programs had a much higher retention rate than teachers who had passed through schools of education. New Jersey's alternative teacher certification program currently produces from 20 percent to 25 percent of all the new teachers hired in the state.

Texas has also implemented alternative certification programs to address teacher shortages. These programs also combine strong academic coursework, mentoring, working with other candidates and field-based learning. Importantly, while 91 percent of all public school teachers in Texas are white, 41 percent of teachers entering through the state's alternative programs are persons of color.

Focus on subject matter. All teachers in Maryland must have deep subject matter knowledge. The state's recent policy changes that require all teacher candidates seeking high school certification to have a major in their content area and requiring all candidates to take coursework in teaching reading are important steps. The state also should ensure that all prospective elementary and middle school educators — regardless of their path into the profession — have a major in a subject area. The state could limit potential content majors to the core academic areas of English, mathematics, natural sciences, history, geography and economics.

Provide teachers with serious opportunities for advancement — without having to leave the classroom. Our best teachers should have opportunities to advance in their careers and share their knowledge and skills with other teachers without leaving the classroom. Several school districts are now experimenting with models that allow teachers with expertise in content knowledge or pedagogy to serve as "coaches" or "curriculum leaders" for their schools. For example, in elementary schools throughout Austin, Boston, Los Angeles, New York City, Pittsburgh and other districts, faculty with strengths in particular subjects — math, science and English, for example — act as school subject coaches and take the lead in curriculum and instruction issues at their elementary schools.

Similarly, the state education agency in Arizona worked with several school districts to pilot the Milken Family Foundation's "Teacher Advancement Program." This program creates opportunities for educators to advance in the profession without leaving the classroom by demonstrating expertise and having progressively responsible duties — all related to teaching and learning at the teacher's school. Master teachers in this system can earn salaries as high as $100,000 annually.

Make financial incentives truly meaningful. The incentives now in place to attract teachers to Maryland are admirable and in many ways innovative, but the dollar amounts of the stipends are perhaps too low to really make a dent in recruiting and retaining teachers — for the neediest schools in particular. There is also some evidence that too few teachers are aware of the state's incentives for exemplary educators. Targeted bonuses in California are substantial enough to serve as a real incentive: Teachers who are nationally certified and teach in low-performing schools earn $5,000 bonuses for each of four years in the school — for a total of $20,000 above and beyond regular salaries. This policy also encourages greater faculty stability and less turnover at low-performing schools.

Consider paying educators differently who are equipped to teach in high-needs areas — special education, math and science. The state will also need to address the issue of differential pay for educators in shortage areas. Twenty nine percent of secondary math and 24 percent of secondary science teachers in Maryland are teaching out-of-field, as are 27 percent of special education teachers. Yet as a report this past summer from the *Leadership Maryland Forum for Policy Change* indicates, college students majoring in the natural sciences or mathematics are less likely than students with other majors to report positive impressions of teaching careers, and they are more likely to underscore salary differences between teaching and other professions. Maryland policymakers must provide financial and other incentives to recruit and retain teachers in these critical content areas.

✓ **Recommendation: School districts must help schools become truly standards-based organizations, not seat-time organizations. And policymakers should help organize the teaching profession to remove barriers to matching the strongest teachers with the neediest schools.**

Hold learning constant, not time. Again, *Every Child Achieving* speaks to the need for a substantial restructuring of time that is focused on learning. All schools must make better use of existing teacher-student contact hours, and many schools will need more time for learning. School districts must take on the challenge of reorganizing time and schooling to allow for adequate teacher planning and professional development, as well as sufficient extra help for students. School systems, particularly those in which a majority of students are going to need extra learning opportunities and more time to reach standards, should be encouraged to experiment with extended day and year contracts for educators that also translate into extended time-on-task for students.

One promising, comprehensive example comes from Nauset, Mass., a regional, rural high school district on Cape Cod. In exchange for a 14 percent pay increase over three years and a .75 salary credit for each new professional development day, the school district and union revised the teacher

contract to extend the school day by 45 minutes and the year from 180 to 189 days, with the stipulation that the extra time be devoted to planning and development activities shaped by the district but largely designed by the educators. The high school in Nauset also adopted a rotating eight-block schedule with 85-minute class periods uninterrupted by bells or public announcements, as well as shared, departmental lunch hours that permit department faculty to engage informally on teaching and learning issues. Teachers report that they now have greater opportunities for in-depth focus and discussion in class and collaboration among themselves outside of class around the goal of high achievement for all students.

Match strengths to needs. In other professions, those with the greatest skill and experience are assigned to the problems that are most challenging and difficult. No responsible law firm would turn complex litigation to a novice, just as no hospital would put a resident in charge of an intensive care unit. But school systems routinely leave complex learning challenges requiring intensive care in the hands of inexperienced, first-year teachers. The state should do whatever it takes to attract the strongest, most capable and most experienced teachers and principals to schools with the most persistent underachievement or the highest rates of poverty. In cooperation with the teacher organizations, Maryland should work to adapt local contracts and create incentives so that the most experienced teachers are more likely to choose the neediest schools. Salary credits and bonuses could be awarded to highly skilled educators who commit to teach in challenging environments for a number of years. No statewide or local rules or collective bargaining agreements should stand in the way. In the long run, these changes could yield the highest rates of return on the state's investment.

The Curriculum and Professional Development Gap

As difficult as the journey to high-quality academic standards has been for many states, putting the standards into practice and aligning daily classroom life with standards is an even more challenging yet essential task.

The approaches outlined below would build off the state's already strong partnerships with local school leaders by combining leadership and capacity and would meet a largely unmet need — without impeding local control of curriculum. Nor will such efforts lead to a standardization of classrooms across the state, as some critics may argue. Instead, a carefully-designed, statewide, collaborative effort to upgrade local curriculum, assessments and professional development will actually *enhance* teacher creativity and flexibility by providing teachers with additional options, resources and tools from which to draw.

✓ **Recommendation: Partner with school districts, and perhaps other states, to identify and disseminate — on a voluntary basis — exemplary, research-based curriculum materials.**

When Maryland started with school reform in 1989, the state focused its efforts on the goals, measures and incentives for schools to achieve at higher levels. Schools were asked to be responsible for curriculum, instruction, professional development and other teaching and learning tools. But many states now are finding that the balance struck in the early 1990s between local control and statewide responsibility is insufficient to ensure that all children are provided with rich

learning opportunities. Local school officials and educators with whom we spoke stressed the importance of building a challenging curriculum aligned with state standards, but they acknowledged the barriers to getting it done on their own: resources, expertise and lack of control over textbook publishers. While a few Maryland school systems are deploying resources to align curriculum with state standards, in our analysis, most Maryland school districts would prefer to invest their resources in other ways, such as in professional development and extra supports for students at risk of not meeting state standards. To support and assist such school districts, we encourage the state to enhance its role in the area of curriculum.

MSDE should coordinate a locally driven yet statewide effort to identify, create and disseminate aligned curriculum and teaching materials and models that local districts can elect to use. It is not essential that the state agency itself develop the materials; the goal is for all school districts to have access to the same high-quality materials that have been tested and proven to raise achievement. State officials can collaborate with teacher, principal and district leaders, as well as independent organizations and experts, to identify or create curriculum materials that align with state standards (including standards-based activities, textbooks, compilations of primary sources, peer-juried lesson plans, examples of student work, etc.). Such materials should include multiple pathways to meet the standards and provide guidance to educators about students who are at different stages in meeting the standards or who have special needs, such as English language learners or advanced students.

The state education department's Web site (www.mdk12.org) already contains materials developed by Maryland educators showing ways to connect teaching with state standards and MSPAP. The Web site would be a natural place for educators to go to access aligned, research-based curriculum materials, share locally-adapted materials and implementation ideas, and collaborate with each other to solve difficult teaching and learning problems.

It is very possible that suitable aligned materials will not exist and new ones will need to be created. Because it is extremely difficult for any one state, particularly a small one, to develop aligned materials from scratch or influence the vast national textbook and instructional materials market, Maryland may want to consider forming a "curriculum consortium" with other leading states to identify and disseminate aligned materials. This consortium could use its collective leverage to influence the publishing industry to develop higher quality, standards-aligned, research-based materials.

✓ **Recommendation: Assist local school districts in building classroom, school and district assessments as part of the curriculum materials.**

As education officials rethink the state assessment program to respond to the new federal legislation, school districts in Maryland should be encouraged to focus on formative testing that is also aligned to state standards but serves more immediate diagnostic needs for teachers and parents. Current MSPAP tests provide useful data, but these data are more useful to curriculum planning and accountability decisions than for diagnostic uses at the individual student level. And even if the state revised MSPAP or developed new criterion-referenced tests, in a fully standards-based school system, school districts will want additional tools and more timely results.

All teachers and principals must have on-demand access to diagnostic, formative assessment tools that can be administered during the school year on an as-needed basis, scored by school faculty, and used sensitively to make changes in classroom instruction or schoolwide curriculum. Districts will want tools for use at the end of grading periods or semesters to assess the progress of schools in implementing and meeting state standards. But according to the interviews we conducted, the majority of school systems in Maryland do not have the capacity to develop their own item banks, the technology to disseminate items or the formative assessments that will be needed.

Achieve encourages MSDE to take a leading role in developing local capacity to create items and instruments that can be curriculum-embedded and that align to state standards. Again, Maryland may want to partner with other leading reform states to study best practices, take advantage of emerging technologies, and make available on a voluntary basis a variety of diagnostic testing tools.

✓ **Recommendation: Invest in a coordinated, focused strategy to equip all current teachers with the knowledge and skills to prepare all students for success in the core content areas.**

Although the state has recently emphasized issues like teacher preparation, right now there does not seem to be a coordinated state strategy for improving the quality of the existing teaching force in Maryland. Similarly, MSDE has recently begun some interesting programs to help principals become better instructional leaders, but more work is needed. There are high hopes for the Professional Development Schools, which are intended to provide clinical experiences for practicing teachers, but we did not see much evidence of the effectiveness of this strategy. The establishment of Regional Professional Development Networks could be a very promising strategy, but our review team heard very little about the way in which these networks contribute to the development of capacity. To be truly effective, these networks each will need to have a laser-like focus on the content of the state's standards in the core content areas, student performance data, training in assessment literacy, and a range of techniques and interventions for struggling students and those with special needs. Without a sustained effort to build capacity among Maryland educators, it is likely that the state's efforts to raise standards, especially in high school, will be severely challenged.

The good news is that a consensus has emerged within the education community, based on research and experience, about what high-quality professional development looks like in a standards-based system. First, it is content-driven, focused on helping teachers understand the concepts underlying the standards and equipping them with a repertoire of instructional skills to help students master them. Second, it is woven into the fabric of the teachers' work life, not relegated solely to after-school hours, Saturdays and summers. Third, it is sustained over time and engages teachers in professional networks that help them take increasing responsibility for their own learning. *Every Child Achieving* shares much of this vision of professional development; now MSDE and school systems must implement the vision.

Spend wisely. The state's first step in implementing a coordinated strategy to upgrade professional development should be to find out how state and local professional development dollars are being spent. Preliminary studies of professional development funding and activities show that, too often,

specialization and fragmentation of professional development resources reduce the individual attention most students receive and limit a school's flexibility to respond to student needs. And too much time and money are spent on "drive-by workshops," rather than sustained, job-embedded coaching and learning. By examining various existing funding streams and programs, the state and individual districts will undoubtedly discover dollars that can be reallocated toward high priorities, as well as provide solid information about new funding that may be needed.

Involve higher education. The state's K–16 Partnership has taken on the issue of teacher preparation; now it should make the delivery of professional development a priority as well. Faculty from schools of education — especially from arts and sciences — must be in schools, working with teachers to deepen content knowledge and understanding and broaden their "toolbox" of instructional techniques. The Commission for Higher Education can encourage these efforts by incorporating such fieldwork requirements into accountability for colleges and universities.

Tie salary credit and licensure to training, performance and professionalism. Educators, governors and business leaders at both the 1999 and 2001 Summits committed to adopting pay-for-performance systems. Maryland school systems and teacher organizations should work together to raise the status of teaching and inject more incentives for high achievement into the profession. Programs in the Colonial School District of Pennsylvania, Denver and Cincinnati, for example, were created collaboratively between local unions and district and community leadership. These programs allow teachers to earn higher salaries if they have advanced knowledge and skills or if their students' performance meets targets.

The Next Evolution in Assessment

Achieve recognizes that staying the course with ambitious assessments for more than seven years is a major accomplishment, and we especially commend the state for moving to bring higher standards to high school with the upcoming High School Assessments. Yet, a new era in education reform is beginning in Maryland. In particular:

- Now that clear and specific statewide standards are in place, Maryland's assessment system must be closely tied to these standards. Standards must now be the driver of curriculum and instruction, not assessments.

- The High School Assessments represent Maryland's first major effort to raise standards and achievement in high schools. And Maryland universities and businesses want to align the High School Assessments with the knowledge and skills needed for success in college and high-performance jobs.

- Under the new federal law, all states will be required to administer annual assessments in grades 3–8 in reading and math and track the progress of individual students in achieving standards in these grades. While the details are still being worked out, it is likely that tests must align to state standards and produce results that are comparable from year to year.

The Achieve review panel heard frequently from Maryland educators who are concerned with the potential for MSPAP, CTBS and the High School Assessments to send confusing signals to schools, students and parents. While Maryland schools have been utilizing CTBS or other norm-referenced tests for several years, MSPAP, not CTBS, has been the focus of state accountability actions. If results from CTBS become part of the school accountability system to meet the federal requirements, then educators will need to pay greater attention to its content. And the High School Assessments will influence instruction in middle schools as well as high schools. Key questions must be addressed, including: What subject matter do these various tests assess and what overlap is there? If, as some suggest, the CTBS assesses basic skills while MSPAP tests higher-order skills, how will educators focus their attention to prepare students for both tests? Does MSPAP emphasize the content knowledge that students will need to learn in order to be prepared for the end-of-course High School Assessments?

It is also unclear that information from MSPAP (which provides school-level results) and CTBS (which provides student-level results) can be meaningfully combined or compared to track the progress of individual students in meeting standards as they move from grade to grade. The CTBS is useful for providing student-level results quickly and inexpensively and for producing national comparisons, but it is less useful for measuring state standards or giving teachers diagnostic information about student strengths and weaknesses. And the Achieve review panel frequently heard complaints from educators and parents about the lack of results for individual students from MSPAP.

✓ **Recommendation: Align all assessments to get improved data and decisionmaking.**

The goal of all assessment development efforts in Maryland should be to provide a seamless set of data points about the progress of students and schools toward meeting rigorous state K–12 standards. We recommend that, over the next several years, MSDE align and articulate all assessments administered in grades K–8 with the High School Assessments. This "backward-mapping" will help ensure that all students are being prepared for success in high school and beyond; and it will help parents, educators and the public understand what could otherwise become a confusing array of tests. It may make sense for the state to begin this process by first analyzing the extent to which the High School Assessments themselves set a rigorous bar, one that will enable all students to be prepared for college or meaningful postsecondary employment.

In Achieve's view, various kinds of assessments can coexist and serve multiple purposes, as long as the state verifies and communicates with educators in a straightforward manner how each assessment aligns to state standards and fits with each other. However, at present, it is unclear that the MSPAP, CTBS and High School Assessments currently align well enough to each other to help set a high and consistent standard for achievement from prekindergarten through high school. Unless the state is able to show how these kinds of assessments fit together, and why MSPAP in particular is so critical, it is possible that over time the CTBS will move to the foreground, particularly as the focus on annual school improvement escalates under new federal mandates. State assessments must adequately measure state standards and report on how well students are achieving state standards; the CTBS is unlikely to meet these two critical needs. The state's goal

must ultimately be to align all assessments with standards — and to each other — so that schools and students focus on the standards — not the tests.

✓ **Recommendation: Align all assessments to the standards, and ensure that results for individual students about their progress in achieving standards are available from all state assessments.**

All assessments required by the state in every grade and especially in grades 3–8 should align with the knowledge, skills and rigor embodied by the state's content standards. This may seem obvious, but it is something that many states are struggling with. In Achieve's work to benchmark the standards and alignment of assessments with standards in more than 10 states, only Massachusetts has had strongly aligned standards and tests.

As the state "backward-maps" the assessments, it should start with the standards for the core subjects in high school. All elementary and middle school tests should prepare students to demonstrate mastery of the knowledge and skills measured by the curriculum-based High School Assessments. Some concepts in the traditional subject areas that will be required for graduation — for example, algebra and data analysis, geometry, U.S. history, government or biology — may need to be tested earlier, later, in greater depth or with more items than they are in the current MSPAP and CTBS instruments used in elementary and middle schools. Other, less central, topics could be omitted if they do not align well with the High School Assessments.

It will not be an easy task for Maryland to expand and retool its testing program for the elementary and middle grades, but it is imperative. Families deserve to have standards-based results for individual children that can be compared and tracked from year to year. Simply combining results from various existing assessments may, in the end, meet the letter of the federal law, but probably not its spirit. In building a standards-based, articulated and comparable assessment system, Maryland can be at the forefront of thinking and working through the complexities of adapting a state assessment system to meet these needs.

Strengthening Accountability for All Schools

While the state has made a great deal of progress in holding schools accountable, a new era in accountability for adults in Maryland must begin. To ensure that all schools have tools to understand the state's standards and assessments and focus on raising achievement, make progress toward meeting high standards more rapid, and provide additional supports and incentives to students, schools and districts, Maryland leaders should consider enacting a number of refinements to state assessment and accountability policies.

✓ **Recommendation: Make the statewide assessments more transparent to the public and useful for educators.**

Transparency is the extent to which educators and the public understand and can use achievement data to transform schooling. While MSPAP is a teacher-developed and teacher-scored test, more effort may be needed to convince the public that what the state expects all students to know and be

able to do is relevant and worthwhile. What is being tested on MSPAP should not be a state secret, yet fewer than 15 sample MSPAP activities, all dating from 1994 to early 1997, are available to the public. This is not currently the case with the High School Assessments — entire released field-tests are available for algebra, geometry, biology, English and government — and when the High School Assessments are operational, the state should continue to release most or all of the exams. At least five other states — including Maine, Massachusetts and Texas — annually release their entire criterion-referenced tests. Other states — like New Jersey — have developed nearly identical sample tests to explain what is being measured and help educators plan instruction. Although there are cost implications, we believe the state should more frequently and systematically release actual MSPAP tasks, scoring guides and sample student work to build continuing confidence in the tests.

Utility is the extent to which statewide testing results are released in a timely and useful fashion. In our view, Maryland has made a wise choice in developing more sophisticated performance tests, rather than choosing simpler tests whose results may be returned more quickly to teachers but provide less important information. As Maryland moves to retool its existing assessments, however, policymakers may need to consider including items that are traditionally easier and faster to score, such as multiple-choice items. We also encourage the state to take advantage of new scoring and administration technologies to help reduce the time needed to return results to schools and the public.

Strategic use of data by schools is key to their efforts to achieve high standards. Once the statewide assessment system has been upgraded and expanded, school districts will need help making sense of all the data. MSDE, MBRT or the Regional Professional Development Networks should deliver assessment-literacy training to district administrators and to lead/master teachers and focus particularly on how to use and interpret assessment results. And the state could help districts invest in new data reporting, analysis and warehousing technologies so that educators can organize and coordinate classroom instruction around standards-based achievement and communicate with families about students' progress.

✓ **Recommendation: Hold *all* schools, not just those at the bottom, responsible for making continuous improvement in the performance of *all* students.**

We believe that by taking the following steps to refine and strengthen school accountability designations, educators will have more clearly defined targets, and parents and communities will have more useful and understandable information about school performance.

Refine the school ratings policy. Of all state policies, the criteria for determining which schools are making sufficient progress toward meeting state standards, which schools are holding steady but not improving sufficiently and which schools are in danger of not meeting standards must be the most explicit and widely understood. Transparency is essential and is, in fact, one of the most notable elements of Texas' widely discussed school ratings system. As Maryland enters the next decade of accountability for elementary and middle schools, we feel that the state should seriously examine its current school rating policy. It is not clear that it is either as transparent or as sophisticated as it will need to be, particularly in light of the new federal legislation.

Maryland's current school identification policy shines the spotlight only on the most troubled schools, nearly all of which are in Baltimore City and Prince George's County. Schools are identified as "reconstitution-eligible" only if they have failed to meet a specified performance level. Yet an optimal accountability system identifies and rates all schools in the state. To ensure sufficient progress and fairness, *all* schools need targets for absolute performance, as well as for adequate progress (for example, improving achievement by a certain percentage) from year to year. All schools should have targets that are meaningful and achievable — even relatively high-performing schools — so that "continuous improvement" guides local decisionmaking.

And all schools need to know that even modest improvement means something. During our conversations with Maryland citizens, we learned that it is not entirely clear how much progress schools must make on MSPAP in order to move off the "reconstitution-eligible" list. In other states, schools that make even minimal improvements are recognized for their efforts, even if they are still under state watch.

Maryland should consider adopting the approach used effectively in states like North Carolina and Texas to rate the achievement of all schools. Delaware, too, has a promising model that uses a formula combining information on whether students are proficient, whether the school has improved over time, and whether the school has reduced the proportion of low-performing students. Then, each school is compared to a statewide target. Maryland needs a comprehensive analysis and rating system that identifies how far every school in Maryland is from reaching the state's performance goals and encourages and requires each school to make progress each year toward the goals. Such ratings should take into account multiple data points (e.g., performance in several subject areas and grades for two or more years) in order to be fair and technically sound.

Make closing the achievement gap a priority. Standards-based reform is the nation's best hope to achieve the twin goals of excellence and equity in education. Maryland has made some progress toward raising the performance of disadvantaged students, but not enough, and schools should have incentives to focus specifically on low-achievers. Perhaps the most important element of Texas's school accountability system is that school designations are based on the achievement of various student groups (e.g. African-Americans, Hispanics, economically disadvantaged students) within the school — not just the school's overall or average performance. In other words, for a school to be rated "acceptable," at least 50 percent of all students and of all student subgroups must pass all subject area Texas Assessment of Academic Skills tests given at that school. This requirement seems to have succeeded in convincing many Texans that all children can learn at high levels, and the policy is paying dividends. For example, African-American students in Texas substantially outperform their peers in all other states on NAEP. This focus on not only looking at disaggregated data from state tests but also requiring schools to pay attention to the progress of all students is a major element of the new federal accountability policy.

As the comprehensive school ratings policy is defined, all elementary and middle schools in Maryland should be held accountable for the achievement and progress of all ethnic and socioeconomic groups. If a school's overall performance on MSPAP is high because white students score very well, yet a significant proportion of minority students do not, that school should not be deemed satisfactory under state accountability policy. Conversely, if achievement

among African-American students is rising, yet overall achievement at the school is flat, this school should be recognized for making some improvement even if not enough to meet the state's targets.

Hold high schools accountable for raising standards and achievement. The advent of the High School Assessments brings the opportunity to provide incentives for high schools to focus on the achievement of all students. As experience has shown in most states, Maryland will likely find that changing the culture and practices of high schools is difficult. Maryland education policymakers should include high schools in the updated school accountability program, using results from the High School Assessments as the primary indicator of achievement and providing incentives to reduce the achievement gap and make substantial progress with all students.

Because high schools should be held accountable for the progress and achievement of their upper-level students as well, additional measures of high school performance should be factored into school ratings. These may include participation in advanced courses such as AP, improvements in four-year graduation rates, and participation rates and achievement on the higher-level High School Assessments that are not currently required for graduation (such as Algebra II).

✓ **Recommendation: Provide more direct assistance to struggling schools.**

While the state requires all reconstitution-eligible schools to submit school improvement plans outlining the changes that are needed and how the school will implement the plans, it is not entirely clear to Achieve's review panel that the plans are sufficient levers for change or that such schools are always able to implement these plans on their own. And while the Challenge Schools program appears to be worthwhile, many more Maryland schools than are served by this program could benefit from external assistance and tools.

We encourage Maryland policymakers to provide technical assistance and/or tools to all schools placed in the bottom categories of performance under the revised accountability system. These tools may include leadership development, curriculum upgrades, investments in sustained and ongoing professional development, before- and after-school academic programs for students, safety, discipline and school environment changes, and others. In augmenting its capacity to assist schools, MSDE may want to look at statewide programs in place in Kentucky and North Carolina that send expert educators in to help reorganize troubled schools around standards. Rhode Island has an interesting program that provides focused data analysis and assistance to all schools over a five-year period.

Given Maryland's small size and history of cooperation with districts, it may make the most sense for MSDE to collaborate with local school districts in building capacity of schools and educators at struggling schools. The state can formalize this collaboration by holding districts responsible for providing assistance and tools.

Several school districts in other states have developed innovative programs that are beginning to show results, such as the reallocation of resources to the neediest schools in Boston, San Diego and

Fairfax County, Va., or the districtwide curriculum and professional development investments in Lancaster, Pa.

✓ **Recommendation: Achieve *Every Child Achieving.***

As noted earlier, the vision articulated in *Every Child Achieving* is one of the most comprehensive in the country. And because its central goal is to ensure that all students are prepared to meet the more demanding high school graduation requirements, the state board of education voted last year to delay implementation of the High School Assessments from the class of 2004 to the class of 2007, when the program will be fully funded. We understand that full funding has been realized through recent legislative actions in a number of education-related programs.

While we believe that the vision articulated in this plan sets out proper roles for school, district and state leaders, the state has a responsibility to make sure the plan's lofty ideals are implemented well. To achieve the vision in *Every Child Achieving*, MSDE needs sufficient resources to put together a state infrastructure to support this plan and ensure that educators, schools and communities have sufficient training and proper tools to implement the plan.

Staying the Course with Higher Graduation Standards

Maryland has acted steadily and sensibly to hold adults accountable first, and then follow with incentives to show students that their achievement matters to their success. Notably, the MBRT has for several years conducted a statewide "transcript campaign," *Achievement Counts*, that encourages employers to ask for high school student records as part of hiring decisions. The program also includes a public relations campaign to communicate with students about the importance of high achievement. And test scores on the High School Assessments are now reported on all student transcripts. It is now time to extend accountability from schools in Maryland to students and ask higher education and employers to take responsibility for results in their hiring and admissions decisions.

✓ **Recommendation: Stay on track with higher graduation standards for the class of 2007.**

The Achieve panel heard from some stakeholders who would prefer to delay the graduation requirements yet again. We believe this would level too great a blow to the state's efforts to help every Maryland student achieve high standards. Perhaps more than any other state, Maryland's approach to assessment and accountability has been measured, meaningful and fair. In our view, the state is very committed to meeting its moral responsibility to provide resources and opportunities for all students to learn and has done more on this count than many states. And the end-of-course testing requirements for seniors graduating in the class of 2007 are not too rigorous: The four tests are based on ninth- and 10th-grade course material.

It is worth noting that recent evidence from Massachusetts shows that when tests count, students take them seriously; more than 82 percent of Massachusetts 10th graders in the class of 2003 — the first class required to earn a standards-based diploma — passed the English exam on the first try,

while 75 percent passed the mathematics exam on their first try. These figures are up from 60 percent and 55 percent in 2000 (when the tests didn't count). The results are also encouraging for students of color. More than 60 percent passed the English exam and 48 percent passed the math, up from 40 percent and 23 percent in 2000.

Though there undoubtedly will be setbacks and some level of initial student failures, Maryland should stay on track with the higher-skills diploma for the class of 2007. Students in this class will have attended standards-based schools since their first day of public education, and they deserve the opportunity to demonstrate their attainment of high standards. In fact, it's fairer to identify students whose skill levels are deficient and help them while they're still in public school than to graduate them unprepared for work or college.

✓ **Recommendation: Extend responsibility for results beyond the K–12 education system.**

The K–12 education system should not bear the full weight of accountability alone. Maryland business executives and college presidents should pledge to support school improvement by aligning their entrance requirements with high school standards and by actually using standards-based achievement data in their hiring and admissions processes. This commitment will help illustrate to the general public that standards-based diplomas are not about punishing students, but are instead about opening doors to the worlds of work and higher education.

The demands of the knowledge economy mean that more workers than ever before will need advanced mathematics, language, science and critical thinking skills; and in many industries, the college degree is rapidly becoming the minimum requirement to obtain and retain career-track jobs. All students who want to enter college should be prepared to succeed in freshman-level coursework and, ultimately, to complete their degrees. For several years, Maryland has required postsecondary institutions to report back to feeder high schools the performance of all graduates in their first-year courses.

Now Maryland policymakers should act to close the gap between high school graduation and college readiness so that all students will be prepared to succeed. Achieve recommends that MSDE build off the existing preK–16 partnership with the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the University of Maryland System, and the state's community and four-year colleges to align graduation and admissions/placement requirements. Because MSDE has already planned to develop end-of-course High School Assessments in more advanced courses — notably Algebra II and upper-level English — Maryland's colleges and universities should move to require students to pass these exams as part of their admissions requirements or offer scholarships for students with high performance on these High School Assessments. Such moves will be bold, no doubt, but they will signal to parents, students, employers and educators that high school graduates must have higher skills than many currently do if they are to be ready for college, that standardized aptitude tests should not be the only meaningful college admissions tests when curriculum-based achievement tests are available, and that higher education leaders in Maryland firmly support K–12 education reform.

Business leaders should take similar steps to expand the *Achievement Counts* campaign and begin to require potential job applicants to achieve at certain levels on the High School Assessments.

Sustaining Public Support

Without question, when students' futures are tied to testing, Maryland's efforts to garner educator and public support for reform will be tested. As stakes for students increase, so will pressure against the standards and assessments. Achieve's review team picked up "early warning signals" from parents in particular about the coming accountability for students. They and others will need to be reassured early and often that higher standards are imperative, relevant and implemented fairly.

Experience from other states suggests that a strong effort to support standards and accountability will need to be in place. At the same time, the public and parents in particular must believe in the fairness and reasonableness of the measures. It will be critical for Maryland policymakers to communicate to families, taxpayers and educators that education reform is not about closing the doors to opportunity or punishing students — rather, it is a way to bring increased learning opportunities and resources to students so that once they graduate from high school, they are well prepared for the opportunities and challenges that await them.

✓ **Recommendation: Be ready to build "safety valves" into the system.**

Experience from other states suggests that education policymakers, elected officials, employers and university leaders must be willing to stand in support of the state assessments and incentives, while at the same time be willing to consider "safety net" strategies for a limited number of students. It is not unreasonable to expect that, even with a fully realized *Every Child Achieving*, some students will not succeed on all the tests. If such students have demonstrated good-faith efforts to take and pass the assessments on multiple occasions, if they have come very close to meeting the standards, and if they have good grades in their academic coursework and have engaged in a rigorous curriculum, then the state may need to consider adjustments to the graduation policy.

For example, some students' test scores may fall within just a few points of passing, or some students may pass three of four High School Assessments, but do not pass one exam even after several tries. In Louisiana, students who fail state tests at the end of the school year attend summer school and have the opportunity to take the tests again. Some states — notably Indiana and Texas — have policies, such as local appeals processes, that allow parents, principals and teachers to decide whether students on the margins of passing should be allowed to graduate or move on to the next grade — even if they have not met all of the standards-based requirements. Maryland should be ready to work with local school leaders to put together fair yet firm "safety valves" for such students.

✓ **Recommendation: Connect higher standards to higher education and employment.**

Maryland must show that its standards relate to the requirements for success in employment and higher education and that its assessments are fair and accurate. One way of doing so is to engage front-line managers from Maryland industries and businesses and college faculty in efforts to define their entry-level expectations for what workers and college students should know and be able to do. These "real-world" expectations can then be communicated to middle and high school students, their families and K–12 educators. Two national projects — the Standards for Success project sponsored by the Association of American Universities and the University of Oregon, and the American Diploma Project sponsored jointly by Achieve, the Education Trust, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and the National Alliance of Business — will provide some national research on employer and university needs that a local effort in Maryland could build on. Such data will help reassure parents and students, community leaders, educators and policymakers that what is expected and tested is necessary for all students to learn if they are to be successful citizens, employees and thinkers.

✓ **Recommendation: Maryland business and community leaders, in cooperation with state education officials, should ratchet up communications with key stakeholders, including parents, teachers and principals.**

Once the state has demonstrated the alignment of its standards with the needs of colleges and employers, teachers must be enlisted to support the higher graduation standards. The public must be aware and supportive. Parents of low-income students must see standards and accountability as the pathway to equity, rather than as a threat to their children. To accomplish this, state education officials, business and community leaders will need to initiate a concerted public engagement campaign to educate people about why the school reforms in general, and the graduation requirements in particular, are so critical to the future of Maryland's children.

MBRT has already developed its unique *Achievement Counts* and *Parents Count* campaigns that make creative use of vehicles such as the Web, local radio personalities and a business speakers' bureau to reach parents at their workplaces and teenagers in school and at home. It is time to take these efforts to the next level: Business leaders and community activists should partner with state education officials from K–12 and higher education to expand communications with critical stakeholders.

To facilitate and build off of the existing partnerships with government and MBRT's communications campaigns, Maryland leaders should consider forming an independent nonprofit organization like the Partnership for Learning in Washington state, the Prichard Committee in Kentucky or Mass Insight Education in Massachusetts that will independently support and communicate about reform. These organizations have been successful in large part because they have focused their limited resources on key audiences — state and local policymakers, school superintendents and school board members, for example — and they have implemented thoughtful and targeted media strategies. A public engagement effort in Maryland could expand on these organizations' successes by also focusing on teachers and principals, as educators are typically the most credible voices with families. Parents should be a major audience as well.

CONCLUSION

The "locked-arms" approach taken by Maryland's policymakers to school reform over the 1990s would have yielded little in the way of improved performance had the state not also developed thoughtful and comprehensive education policies and programs and stayed the course with these reforms for more than a decade. Maryland clearly is among the vanguard of leading education states, yet the challenges of the next decade require invigorated and sustained leadership.

The recommendations we offer in this report call for a continued commitment to high standards for every child, accountability for results and an outstanding education workforce. Some of our ideas will require rethinking what is already in place, some will require more money, and some may not be popular with all stakeholders. But if Maryland is going to continue down the path of making its schools second to none, it will require decisive action and greater investment.

There are at least two things that could make it difficult for the state to fully implement the recommendations in this report. The first is limited financial resources. There is no question that in the current economy, states are facing tough choices about where to invest their educational dollars. We urge Maryland policymakers to review the recommendations in this report — and those of the Visionary Panel — and decide which areas and programs should be given highest priority. The state will want to invest its resources and efforts in the areas that will have the greatest impact on improved student achievement. In our view, strengthening the assessment and accountability systems and providing teachers and students with the tools and support they need to meet higher standards belong at the top of the list.

The second challenge is the capacity of the state education agency to take on many of the new responsibilities we have suggested. While we already have commented on the high quality of the staff and programs, there are limits to what state agencies can or should do on their own. We encourage MSDE to work closely with school systems and independent, third-party providers to develop a highly coordinated system. It might make sense for the state to request an external analysis of departmental capacity that examines the effectiveness of various programs so that the state superintendent and state board of education can make wise decisions about where dollars and staff can be reallocated to better target the state's priorities.

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This report does not prescribe a detailed blueprint to Maryland policymakers for achieving complex policy changes. Indeed, it is the job of the Visionary Panel for Better Education and state superintendent of education to examine this report and other sources to devise the blueprint for the next decade of reform. Achieve hopes to help the state meet its goal of raising the achievement of all its students by taking a careful look at the progress that has been made in the more than 10 years Maryland has invested in implementing standards-based systems — and by identifying the important work still to be done.

APPENDIX A: REVIEW TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

MATTHEW GANDAL

Matthew Gandal is the executive vice president of Achieve, manages the Washington, D.C., office and is responsible for overseeing Achieve's major initiatives. These include the 2001 and 1999 National Education Summits and a series of follow-up activities Achieve has launched to help states address the Summit goals; the Benchmarking Initiative, which helps states compare their standards, assessments and accountability policies with those of other states and nations; the Mathematics Achievement Partnership (MAP), which is designed to help states improve curriculum and instruction in middle school mathematics and measure student achievement using a common, internationally benchmarked eighth-grade test; and the American Diploma Project.

Before joining Achieve, Mr. Gandal was assistant director for educational issues at the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). He helped AFT launch a variety of programs and publications designed to support standards-based reform efforts in states and school districts. Mr. Gandal was the author and chief architect of *Making Standards Matter*, an annual AFT report evaluating the quality of the academic standards, assessments and accountability policies in the 50 states. He also authored a series of reports that compared student standards and achievement in the United States with those of other industrialized nations.

Mr. Gandal, a graduate of the Maryland public school system, earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Trinity College in Hartford, Conn.

JUDITH JOHNSON

Judith Johnson is an educator with extensive experience in the development and implementation of K–12 educational policies and programs at the federal, state and local school district levels. She is the superintendent of schools for the Peekskill City School District, in Peekskill, N.Y. Prior to her appointment as superintendent of schools, Ms. Johnson served as senior principal advisor to former Secretary of Education Richard Riley on the formulation, development and implementation of national policies that impact elementary and secondary education issues across the nation. She also advised Secretary Riley on social promotion policies and urban education initiatives and launched the development of an expanded testing system to include multiple assessment measures in order to bring a higher level of efficiency and equity to assessment efforts. Ms. Johnson provided leadership for the adoption of standards-based curriculum frameworks, including the development of English language arts programs that were followed by an increase in the numbers of students passing state mandated tests at grades 3, 8 and 10.

Ms. Johnson was recently awarded the National Alliance of Black School Educators Pursuit of Excellence Award (August 2000) and is a member of the National Commission on African-American Education. In addition, she serves on the Annenberg Commission on Urban District Reform and is a board member of the Character Education Programs and the Poverty & Race Research Action Council.

Ms. Johnson received a bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College in Brooklyn, N.Y.; a master's degree in guidance and vocational counseling from New York University; and she has completed doctoral work in educational administration at Teacher's College, Columbia University in New York.

Eugenia Kemble

Eugenia Kemble is executive director of The Albert Shanker Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering candid exchange on education, labor and democracy issues. Beginning as a reporter for the newspaper of AFT's New York City local, The United Federation of Teachers, she became special assistant to Albert Shanker when he was elected to head AFT in 1974. In 1983, Ms. Kemble became the AFL-CIO's representative with the Democracy Program, a coalition effort including the Republican Party, Democratic Party, U.S. Chambers of Commerce and the AFL-CIO, that recommended the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The coalition worked to explain the NED idea as its funding was guided through Congress. Returning to AFT in 1989, Ms. Kemble directed and helped to expand the Education Issues Department as Mr. Shanker's Special Assistant for Educational Issues.

In addition, Ms. Kemble was named the executive director of the AFL-CIO's Free Trade Union Institute, which supported unions struggling for democracy around the world, most notably, Solidarity in Poland.

Ms. Kemble received a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Mount Holyoke College and a master's degree in American civilization from New York University.

S. Paul Reville

S. Paul Reville is lecturer on education and coordinator of state relations at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. He also is the executive director of the Pew Forum on Standards-Based Reform. The forum conducts national policy seminars on key reform issues and provides advice and assistance to a handful of leading-edge states and urban districts engaged in implementing systemic reform programs. Mr. Reville is the chairman of the Massachusetts Education Reform Review Commission. Appointed by the governor, the commission is charged with overseeing the state's implementation of the historic Education Reform Act of 1993.

Prior to his appointment at Harvard, Mr. Reville was the executive director and co-founder of the Alliance for Education, a privately supported, multiservice education foundation dedicated to improving public elementary and secondary education in Worcester and Central Massachusetts. Mr. Reville was also the co-founder and executive director of the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE), an organization that provided key conceptual and political support for the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993. He currently serves as MBAE's executive director. From 1991 to 1996, he served a five-year term on the Massachusetts State Board of Education where he worked on the executive committee and chaired the Massachusetts Commission on Time and Learning. He has been a teacher and a principal in various schools and alternative programs. Mr. Reville is a trustee of Wheelock College and the Public Education Network in Washington, D.C., and serves on various state and civic organizations and

commissions. He has received numerous professional and civic awards and is a frequent speaker, writer and editor on educational matters.

He received a bachelor's degree from Colorado College and a master's degree from Stanford University.

MARIAN ROBINSON

Marian Robinson is currently a doctoral candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. From 1994 to1998, Ms. Robinson was an education program specialist with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement, where her work focused on research and development activities related to standards-based reform (primarily state standards and assessment development), charter school accountability, and national research agenda planning. Early in her career, Ms. Robinson was an assistant English teacher in the Seino District Education Office in Gifu, Japan, from which she provided curricular and instructional support to 12 schools.

Ms. Robinson's current graduate work focuses on governance and organizational change issues related to standards-based reform. She holds a bachelor's degree in English literature and history and a master's of education in comparative education studies from the University of Virginia.

ROBERT SCHWARTZ

Robert Schwartz has been president of Achieve since 1997. Over the previous three-and-a-half decades, Mr. Schwartz has had a rich and varied career in education and government. He has been a high school English teacher and principal; an education advisor to the mayor of Boston and governor of Massachusetts; an assistant director of the National Institute of Education; a special assistant to the president of the University of Massachusetts; the executive director of the Boston Compact, a public-private partnership designed to improve access to higher education and employment for urban high school graduates; and a lecturer on education at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

From 1990 to 1996, Mr. Schwartz directed the education grant-making program of The Pew Charitable Trusts, one of the nation's largest private philanthropies. Among the major reform projects initiated during his tenure at the Trusts were New Standards, a voluntary national system of student performance standards and assessments developed jointly by the University of Pittsburgh, the National Center on Education and the Economy and 17 partner states; and the Pew Network for Standards-Based Reform, a collaborative venture among seven medium-sized school districts committed to systemic reform based on high academic standards.

Mr. Schwartz has written and spoken widely on such topics as urban school reform, public-private partnerships and the role of higher education in K–12 reform. He holds degrees from Harvard and Brandeis Universities and continues to serve as a part-time faculty member at Harvard, where he teaches a course each spring on educational policy and administration.

JEAN SLATTERY

Jean Slattery has been a consultant for Achieve since 1999 and currently serves as associate director for the Benchmarking Initiative. She was supervising director of curriculum development and support in Rochester, N.Y., from 1989 to 1997, with responsibility for overseeing the work of all subject-area directors in the K–12 instructional program. Her earlier responsibilities as a district-level administrator included serving as director of the middle school (1987–89) and junior high (1985–87) programs. During this period, she initiated Teachers as Partners, a peer-coaching staff development program funded by the Ford and Matsushita (Panasonic) Foundations.

Dr. Slattery is also a peer consultant on standards and assessment for the U.S. Department of Education. She has served as a consultant to the Washington, D.C., school district; San Diego Unified School District; a Washington state consortium of rural schools; and the Alabama and Illinois Departments of Education. She has also worked for the Council for Basic Education on projects involving the Flint Community School District, the Nevada Education Department and the Cleveland Municipal School District.

Dr. Slattery received a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Albertus Magnus College, a master's degree in science education from Yale University and a doctorate in science curriculum from the University of Rochester.

SUSAN TRAIMAN

Susan Traiman is director of the Education Initiative at the Business Roundtable (BRT) in Washington, D.C. She oversees the BRT's education reform activities for chief executive officers of leading corporations interested in improving student achievement and raising academic standards in the United States. Ms. Traiman has had over 25 years of experience as an education reformer, working with educators, federal and state policymakers, and business leaders.

Prior to joining the BRT, she was education policies studies director at the National Governors Association (NGA), where she coordinated assistance to governors in developing and implementing systemic education reform strategies. At NGA, she participated in planning the 1989 National Education Summit in Charlottesville, Va., and the subsequent development of National Education Goals. Ms. Traiman was a senior associate with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement, where she designed and managed a system for tracking and reporting on state and local education reform initiatives. She served on the staff of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, contributing to the development of its 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*.

Ms. Traiman came to Washington, D.C., from New Jersey, where she was a teacher and a consultant at a regional service center of the New Jersey Department of Education. She received a bachelor's degree in American civilization and a master's of science degree in education from the University of Pennsylvania.

JENNIFER VRANEK

Jennifer Vranek is the executive director of the Partnership for Learning, a statewide nonprofit education policy organization dedicated to building support for education reform among Washington state's policymakers, educators, civic leaders and the public. Founded in 1995 by then-Lieutenant Governor Joel Pritchard and former Boeing Company Chairman and CEO Frank Shrontz, this unique partnership has gained a national reputation for its public engagement campaign.

Previously, Ms. Vranek was the director of Benchmarking and State Services for Achieve, Inc. located in Washington, D.C. At Achieve, Ms. Vranek directed successful benchmarking projects with more than 15 states, working closely with state education superintendents, governors and business executives to benchmark state education reforms and share best practices. She was also a key staff member in the planning, preparation and follow-up activities for the 2001 and 1999 National Education Summits hosted by Achieve.

Before joining Achieve in 1997, Ms. Vranek was a research assistant at the American Federation of Teachers. Among other projects, she was a principal researcher for *Making Standards Matter*, an annual AFT report evaluating the quality of the academic standards, assessments and accountability policies in the United States, and *Setting Higher Sights*, a comparative analysis of the quality of mathematics assessments in the United States and abroad. Previously, Ms. Vranek lived in Brasilia, Brazil, where she was a project consultant to the World Bank's G-7 Pilot Program to Conserve the Brazilian Rainforest. She also served as the administrative secretary to the Board of Directors of the American School of Brasilia.

A graduate of the public schools in San Antonio, Texas, Ms. Vranek holds a master's of public policy degree from the Georgetown University Public Policy Institute and a bachelor's degree in history from the College of William and Mary in Virginia.

APPENDIX B: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

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APPENDIX C: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Gayle Amos
Special Education and Student Support Services Officer
Baltimore City Public Schools

Buzz Bartlett
Member
Maryland State Board of Education

Doral Bastian
Teacher
Mt. Royal Elementary Middle School
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Phil Benzil
President
Maryland State Board of Education

Traci Blakeley
Special Education Teacher
William B. Wade Elementary School
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Clarence Blount
Senator
Maryland State Senate

Dunbar Brooks
Manager
Baltimore Metropolitan Council

Debbie Brown
Member
Maryland Association of Middle School Principals

Jim Campbell
Delegate
Maryland House of Representatives

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Assistant State Superintendent for School and Student Services
Maryland State Department of Education

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Area Executive Officer, High School
Baltimore City Public Schools

Mary Cary
Assistant State Superintendent for Professional and Strategic Development
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Montgomery County

Trudy Collier
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Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
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Joe Crostic
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Dan Cunningham
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Frederick County Public Schools

Barbara Dezmon
Chair, Achievment Initiative for Maryland's Minority Students
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Dale Fulton
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George Funaro
Executive Director
Visionary Panel for Better Schools

Nancy Grasmick
State Superintendent of Education
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Williette Harbor
Science Department Head
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Steve Halligan
Member
Maryland Business Roundtable

Gary Heath
Branch Chief for Arts and Sciences, Division of Instruction
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Deneen Houghton
Teacher
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Wanda Hurt
Vice President for Legislation
Maryland State Council for PTAs

Robert Kemmery
President
Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals

Jann Jackson
Executive Director
Advocates for Children and Youth

Matthew Jackson
Director of Public Policy
Advocates for Children and Youth

Luwanda Jenkins
Community Affairs Director
The Baltimore Sun

Karen Johnson
Secretary of Higher Education
State of Maryland

Nancy Knopp
Delegate
Maryland House of Representatives

Donald Langenberg
Professor
University of Maryland

Bonnie Leister
Principal
Wyngate Elementary School
Bethesda, MD

Min Leong
Director of Student Services
Montgomery County Public Schools

Daryl McDonald
Baltimore City Scholarship Program Coordinator
The Carson Scholars Fund

Linda McLaurin
Principal
Western High School
Baltimore, MD

Vivian Mack
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Harlem Park Middle School
Baltimore, MD

Robert S. Marshall
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Susan Marx
Executive Assistant to the Community Superintendent
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Betsy Moyer
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Maryland State Teacher Association

Robert Neall
Senator
Maryland State Senate

Eileen O'Rourke
Treasurer
The Abell Foundation

Jude Paquariello
Special Assistant
Office of the Chief Executive Officer
Baltimore City Public Schools

Ronald Peiffer
Assistant State Superintendent, School and Community Outreach
Maryland State Department of Education

Jervie Petty
Principal
Henry E. Lackey High School
Indian Head, MD

Howard Rawlings
Delegate
Maryland House of Representatives

Thomas Raybon
President
Baltimore County Student Council

Minnie Reynolds
Director, Minority Achievement and Multi-Cultural Education
Charles County Government

Edgar Rhoulhac
Vice Provost of Academic Services
Johns Hopkins University

Carl Roberts
Superintendent
Cecil County Schools

Silvia Rodrigez
Member
Maryland Committee on Human Relations

Carmen Russo
Chief Executive Officer
Baltimore City Public School System

Sandy Sanders
English Teacher
Thomas Stone High School
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Skipp Sanders
Deputy State Superintendent
Maryland State Department of Education

Alex Silverbrook
Music Teacher
Sherwood High School
Sandy Spring, MD

Mark Simon
President
Montgomery County Education Association

Marty Smith
President
Anne Arundel Community College

Walter Sondheim
Member
Maryland State Board of Education

Craig Spilman
Principal
Canton Middle School
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Linda Storey
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River Hill High School
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Maryland Buisness
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Vice Chair
Board of Commisioners
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Manager, Human Resources
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Denise Taylor
Teacher
Federal Hill Elementary
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Michael D. Thomas
Superintendent
Somerset County Public
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Gary Thrift
Area Executive, Area III
Elementary
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Tyson Tilden
Commissioner
Board of School
Commissioners
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Schools

Wayne Towers
Retired National Accounts
Manager
Xerox
Committee Member,
"Achievement Counts"
Maryland Business
Roundtable for Education

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend
Lieutenant Governor
State of Maryland

Sharon Van Dyke
Principal
Federal Hill Elementary
School
Baltimore, MD

Pat Welch
Chair
Board of Commissioners
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Jack Wistoff
Member
Maryland State Board of
Education

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Co-Chairs

John Engler, Governor
State of Michigan

Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., Chairman and CEO
IBM Corporation

Co-Vice Chairs

Philip M. Condit, Chairman and CEO
The Boeing Company

Gray Davis, Governor
State of California

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Keith E. Bailey, Chairman, President and CEO
Williams

Roy E. Barnes, Governor
State of Georgia

Craig R. Barrett, President and CEO
Intel Corporation

Frank Keating, Governor
State of Oklahoma

Gary Locke, Governor
State of Washington

Edward B. Rust Jr., Chairman and CEO
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Arthur F. Ryan, Chairman and CEO
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Bob Taft, Governor
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